ORIGIN/ACTION: INR-10

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CONTENTS

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FROM : AMEMBASSY, GUATEMALA

SUBJECT : WEEKA NO. 15

REF :

POLITICAL

1. Peace and Quiet Reigr for the Moment
2. Speculation Mounts Regarding Whereabouts of Arévalo

MILITARY

Negative

PSYCHOLOGICAL

6. Continued Editorial Reaction to Change in Government

RAR

4/15/63 OTHR

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APR 15 PM 2 29 1963

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Clearances:

POLITICAL

1. Peace and Quiet Reign for the Moment

The new Government, still enjoying the support of a wide sector of public opinion, is in firm control of the country. Arevalist and Communist forces still appear somewhat disorganized, although they can be expected to close ranks and look for opportunities. With the advent of traditionally trouble-free Holy Week, at least a temporary aura of peace and calm, in welcome contrast to the intense political activity of past weeks, pervades the atmosphere. The Government has lifted the curfew to permit unhampered celebration. Government offices as well as many businesses closed at noon April 10. The new regime has already made appointments to various sub-cabinet and administrative positions and has just issued Decree-Law No. 8 which is a new "Fundamental Charter of Government" restoring to some extent civil liberties. The timing of elections in a period "not to exceed two years" appeared in a draft, but was left out of the Charter, and this remains a point of interest. The Government--after receiving recognition from several countries, including three from Central America, looked forward to recognition, guidance, and support from the U.S. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: In spite of this week's calm, there are reliable reports that extremists, utilizing students--especially from the more volatile secondary schools--plan to attempt demonstrations next week. Perhaps more important than demonstrations--which may or may not become a reality--are the many unanswered questions about the Government's intentions. The "honeymoon atmosphere" must soon come to an end as the new GOG buckles down to the important task of attackin the pressing political, economic and social problems of the nation. The Communists with the cry of "military dictatorship," will attempt to exploit Arevalist discontent in an effort to create difficulties and violence. (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. Speculation Mounts Regarding Whereabouts of Arévalo

Speculation, most of it ill-informed, was rife regarding the whereabouts of Arévalo. One could take his choice of the hide-out among the Mexican and Venezuelan Embassies, a private house in Guatemala City, a finca on the Coast, or just across the border in Tapachula, Mexico. Columnists in Marroquin Rojas' newspapers began to raise a hue and cry over the supposed need for the Government to discover and divulge to the four winds Arévalo's whereabouts. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Comment: Embassy Mexico reports that Arévalo flew back to Mexico City on a commercial airline from Tapachula on April 9. His silence has not enhanced his position and has added to the confusion among his followers. His clandestine departure from Guatemala after his vow in the March 29 press conference that he would not leave Guatemala "even if it cost him his skin," hardly increases his stature. (CONFIDENTIAL)

Enclosure

PSYCHOLOGICAL

6. Continued Editorial Reaction to Change in Government

Guatemalan editorialists continued to praise the new Government for ending "corruption" and bringing hope to the people. But following their flurry of solidarity proclamations, the newspapers settled down to examining the future.

"El Imparcial," the largest afternooner and the first newspaper to return to earth after the drama of the coup passed into history, urged Peralta and his Government to get to work in improving the nation's economy. It reminded the new Chief of State that he still has the support of the people after toppling the old chief, and now is the time to act and act decisively.

The issue of United States recognition still occupied journalistic thoughts. The GOG's own newspaper, "Diario de Centro America," banner-lined a statement by Secretary of State Dean Rusk that there has been no intentional delay in Washington and that the United States is consulting with Guatemalan officials as well as representatives of other Central American countries. The newspapers found some solace in the announcement that Britain, for years Ydigoras' arch enemy over the question of Belice, had granted recognition to Peralta's regime.

Alvaro Contreras Velez told the story of the visit of the "4 just men" to Costa Rica, seeking that country's recognition.
(UNCLASSIFIED)

JOHN O. BELL

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